

## Step 8

It is time now to clear away the wreckage of our past. We do this by making amends and restitution. Restitution is defined as “the giving back of something that was taken away.”

*Step 8: Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.*

For Step Eight, we'll give you a guide in order for you to have one last opportunity to be certain that all has been uncovered. Please complete the guide on your own as soon as possible.

Now, please take out your inventory forms, as they are the heart of our Eighth Step amends list. But we also need to ask God to reveal to us any others we have harmed but who are not yet on our list. We'll add their names now as we move on to Step Nine.

*Step 9: Made direct amends to such people, wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.*

As part of our effort to be thorough, we must define the word “amend,” and according to dictionary.com, we find:

*a-mend [uh-mend]*

*–verb (used with object)*

1. *to alter, modify, rephrase, or add to or subtract from (a motion, bill, constitution, etc.) by formal procedure: Congress may amend the proposed tax bill.*
2. *to change for the better; improve: to amend one's ways.*
3. *to remove or correct faults in; rectify.*

*–verb (used without object)*

4. *to grow or become better by reforming oneself: He amends day by day.*

### Focus on Others

We can see that our purpose is not just to relieve ourselves of the guilt and shame from the effects of our past actions, but we are to “alter,” “repair,” “to change for the better; improve,” “to correct fault in; rectify” and “become better.”

Moving into our Ninth Step Amends we step from the self-absorption of the first eight steps to the real world. To this point I admitted, I came to believe, I did an inventory, I shared it, I became willing, I asked to have my defects removed, and I made the list of my harms while active in my alcoholism.

But in Step Nine our goal is to heal the damage we have done.

We hurt real people; I did not just hurt “my mother.” Before she ever had me she was a woman with a life and goals and hopes, and I hurt that woman. That real woman.

Now I review my list and come to see these people as independent from me. What do I do to make it better, to improve, to repair, to set right, the real damage I did to these real people. How do I do this without making it more about “me?”

Some people coming into AA are told they do not have to do amends if it will be difficult, embarrassing, or expensive. Many people follow

that direction and, since they have not done the work required by the Step, soon find themselves drunk again – and very surprised.

*“Reminding ourselves that we have decided to go to any lengths to find a spiritual experience, we ask that we be given strength and direction to do the right thing, no matter what the personal consequences might be.”*

*Big Book, page 79*

To do The Work means to Do The Work! Not come up with reasons why the one attempting to achieve lasting sobriety is different and can explain their way out of doing that work.

In the Ninth Step, we focus on the one we have hurt. Sometimes this means that we have to pay money, lose the reputation we had built by hiding the truth, or even serve time in prison to make amends for a real crime.

But we become free, without the guilt, shame, and doom that comes from continuing our life hiding the truth. We can walk down the street without fear of being exposed, face the people we meet, and know that we have done what was in our power to right our wrongs.

## Into More Action

The amends process is explained as the Big Book tells us what to do next:

*“...Now we go out to our fellows and repair the damage done in the past. We attempt to sweep away the debris which has accumulated out of our effort to live on self-will and run the show ourselves. If we haven’t the will to do this, we ask until it comes. Remember, it was agreed at*

*the beginning that we would go to any lengths for victory over alcohol.”*

*Big Book, page 88, 89*

There are five categories of amends. The following are guide lists with the key suggestions in the Big Book for each type. Read Steps Eight and Nine in the Big Book (pages 76 – 84) before using this guide.

The Big Book divides the amends that we need to make into five types. We’ll list each of the amends that you need to make according to the type. Then, before approaching anyone, reread the advice offered by the Big Book regarding each type. Also, seek counsel from your sponsor, spiritual advisor, or another member of the group that’s gone through the amends process. Finally, pray each morning regarding all the items listed. Now, label each with a plus (+) or a minus (-), depending on your willingness to make the amends — a plus indicating immediate readiness and the minus noting the ones you feel more hesitant about.

## Review

- Whom did I hurt?
- What did I do?
- Where was I at fault?
- Where had I been selfish, dishonest, or inconsiderate?
- Did I arouse: Jealousy? Suspicion? Bitterness?
- What Should I have done differently?